

カズネ!

～まっろわぬ神々と神殺しの魔王～

Ⅱ



Roman Holiday, Late Night Edition

After Kusanagi Godou finished taking part in the imposed duel Erica had invited him to at the ancient capital of Rome, it was night time.

Surviving a deadly crisis as usual, Godou ended up causing severe damage to the ancient battlegrounds—the Colosseum.

But in any case, the battle that was full of all sorts of dangers finally concluded.

Godou departed from the tragic(?) scene of the Colosseum and parted with the three association representatives who acted as witnesses to the duel.

Next he returned to the hotel. After a bath, he would go to bed immediately. That was what Godou had decided.

Then after a good night's rest, he was going to carefully reflect on tonight's incident in the morning. In order not to make "this kind" of mistake ever again...

Whenever he turned his gaze in the direction of the Colosseum, the terrible result of his "moment of carelessness" would enter his view.

With a great sense of shame, Godou deeply regretted his actions.

The sounds of police and firefighting sirens could be heard coming from the direction of the Colosseum. This noise caused Godou to be assaulted by further reprimands from his conscience.

In spite of all this, Erica looked rather delighted as she walked beside him.

"Hoho. Tonight's duel has completely publicized the mighty name of Kusanagi Godou. This is the result of various preparations readied beforehand."

Erica explained as she strolled along the late night Roman city streets, prompting great surprise in Godou.

"W-What do you mean by preparations?"

"Hmm. Basically the three VIPs you met at the duel just now. Inviting all three of them certainly took substantial effort. Although there was a suitable excuse, they are rather busy people. In actual fact, I also invited three additional leaders, but they were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts."

"You expressly prepared that much for the sake of letting others witness my power?"

Godou frowned.

"Why would you do such a thing? There's no need to gather all those people for a person like me, right?"

"Don't be nonsensical. In the world of magic, did you know that there is no event more suspenseful than the birth of a Devil King? Sending invitations out would actually exhibit our congeniality instead."

Erica listed out the seven prestigious magic associations recognized in Italy.

The three witnesses of tonight's duel belonged to the [Olden Dame], the [Female Wolf] and the [Capital of Lilies] respectively. In addition, there were the [Bronze Black Cross], the [Eagle of the Blue Sky] and [Aegis].

"Last but not least is my [Copper Black Cross]. Godou, you've already met the commander-in-chief of the association I belong to, my uncle—Paolo Blandelli. Hence, tonight was an opportunity for the other six associations to send representatives to have an audience with the seventh Campione."

Godou never expected that meeting those witnesses actually held such significance—

Realizing the surreal happenings surrounding him, Godou sighed.

"However, Godou, you performed even better than expected. Not only did you show off that level of destructive power to the representatives of the three prestigious associations, you even completely silenced their doubts on whether you were a fake or not."

"I-I wasn't showing off, I simply went too far in a moment of carelessness!"

"It doesn't matter which. What's important is the result. Hoho, let us raise a glass to toast and celebrate tonight."

"Why do we need to toast!?"

"Tonight commemorates Kusanagi Godou's first appearance on the European stage."

Informed by Erica with complete nonchalance, Godou was greatly shocked.

"In actual fact, I prepared a camera beforehand. Godou, your destruction of the Colosseum just now was recorded on video. Currently, the video is being prepared for broadcasting to those involved in the magic world all over Europe. The three VIPs you met have already become witnesses, so the great name of Kusanagi Godou will spread to all the corners of the European world of magic within days."

To think she had prepared things to such an extent. Godou's mood was instantly down in the deeps.

Seeing his reaction, Erica chuckled and displayed a devil's smile.

"Stop making that kind of face, stick your chest out. You currently don't look like a god-slayer at all. Do know that your status will keep rising from now on as the Devil King."

"I have no wish to possess this kind of title that cannot be written on resumes. Neither do I want to raise my status in this manner!"

Objecting loudly, Godou yawned.

It was now late at night. Perhaps due to fatigue from the whole mess at the Colosseum or jet lag, Godou was struck with sleepiness all of a sudden. Getting some rest as early as possible seemed like a good idea.

"In any case, let's hurry back to the hotel for some rest. It's so late already."

Godou had heard earlier that Erica had prepared a place to stay.

Hence he proposed they head back. However, the girl in his company replied:

"That's right, we must open a bottle of wine or champagne to toast and celebrate properly together. Then after that, we should slowly descend upon the bed, to affirm our love for each other."

"W-Wait a minute. Your proposed schedule is clearly very unusual."

Godou was already dead tired. Why did he still need to deal with and retort against such ridiculous matters?

Feeling that life was very unreasonable, Godou continued:

"Aside from the fact that minors like us should not be drinking, spending a night together in the same room on the same bed is even more inappropriate!"

Besides, affirming each other's love or anything of that sort would be even more ridiculous.

As a man, Godou resolutely asserted his refusal and made a clear statement. However, Erica rolled her eyes at him and retorted calmly.

"Say, Godou. What you said just now is quite incorrect... Haven't we already experienced all of it before? It won't be the first time now, right?"

"Uh."

Godou could say nothing in response. Erica continued to list things out:

"We've already drank alcohol together before and spent the night under the same roof. Sleeping in the same bed through the night until morning has happened more than once. We have even bathed together, baring our bodies to each other without reserve..."

Finally, Erica added:

"Besides, we have already reached legal drinking age in Italy."

Drinking laws in Italy were different from Japan's. In this country, the legal drinking age was sixteen.

Having passed both their birthdays, Godou and Erica already fulfilled the required age.

Godou was frozen from a lack of grounds to object. On the other hand, Erica went "What a troublesome guy" as she shrugged, a wry smile appearing on the corners of her lips.

"Godou, although trying to correct your failure to read the mood can provide some hard-sought amusement, it's no fun if it gets too excessive. Let me forgive you on this point for now. Love cannot be cultivated without full consent from both sides."

"I-I see."

"Yes. Because even though you declare unwillingness, once your mood is roused sufficiently, even I would find it difficult to stop you."

"....."

"I really hope you can express your gratitude properly for the fact that I, Erica Blandelli, am a woman with such great tolerance."

Godou fell into a depressed silence.

He mourned for his inability to refute any of her words.

"Nevertheless, simply tolerating is no fun at all. That would be totally not my style."

The blonde beauty suddenly displayed a malevolent smile.

"Hey Godou, if you want to return to the hotel to sleep, give me a goodnight kiss."

"W-What did you say about a goodnight whatever?"

"A kiss. On the cheek is okay, though of course, the lips are fine too. If you do that, I will take you to the hotel."

Only now did Godou realize, he had no idea where the hotel was located. Without Erica to lead the way, he would not be able to find it so easily. However.

"D-Doesn't matter. It's not like I must stay at a hotel."

Godou immediately refused her demand.

"I just need to find shelter somewhere, or even spend the night outdoors. Or simply walk outside the whole night like this. I'm not going to kiss you so rashly ever again!"

Were he in Japan, there would be businesses running twenty-four hours a day such as family restaurants, sauna establishments or manga cafes. However, the ancient capital of Rome did not offer these kinds of shops.

But how could he back down simply due to this level of setback? Godou declared his determination.

"I really think that kind of behavior is too soon for me!"

"Speaking from the one who has engaged in passionate kisses with me numerous times. Oh well, once you're out of options, you'll have no choice but to kiss me in the end."

Erica shrugged lightly.

"Godou, the way you're acting is just as meaningless as an old smoker declaring he'll quit smoking. 'If only I could do it' declarations imply that you wish to keep reminding yourself, but are doomed to failure every time."

"Hmm..."

"However, if you really want to try it, that's fine too. I will accompany you."

A devil's smile flashed across the blonde beauty's lips once more.

"Let us take a stroll on the streets of Rome. But you'll probably fall asleep half way due to exhaustion? If that happens, I'll carry you to the hotel room to take care of you tenderly. Then we'll spend some sweet time together before dawn? Hoho, it'll be fun."

"It's true that I'm very tired, but I will find a way to endure the whole night."

Godou contradicted Erica's speculation that was delivered as if the future was already set.

"You should know quite well, I have a lot of physical stamina."

"Yes. I know very well that you are ridiculously strong, Godou. At the same time, you are a rather careless person who leaves many openings. Given an entire night, I should be able to find a way."

"Find a way?"

"To trick you into drinking a drugged beverage to render you temporarily unconscious. It seems like I should be able to seize an opportunity to have you bound and restrained, then get a car to transport you back to the hotel... See!"

"Stop going 'See!' That's blatant kidnapping!"

Godou chastised Erica who explained her plan with an adorable expression.

"Even for me, I have no wish to go that far. However, if you'll simply ignore my little request, Godou, it can't be helped. Girls in love are liable to do anything when push comes to shove, so be careful."

The self-proclaimed girl in love said something unsettling with a joking tone of voice.

"Besides, a goodnight kiss is something even a child could do. If that's the case, what's the matter? I hope you can show me more generosity than that."

"Uh..."

Godou agreed that this description could be considered "proper." Nevertheless, he remained at a loss for words.

Seeing him like that, Erica smiled with a chuckle.

"So, let me repeat my request again. Please bestow upon me a goodnight greeting in a manner of your choosing. Of course, a kiss on the lips is what I would like the most, but even one on the cheek is fine."

"~~~~~"

A light peck on the cheek was all it would take.

Be that as it may, Godou still felt troubled due to her urging. This was unlike the deep and lengthy "ritual" kissing they engaged in normally. Perhaps it could even be done with a casual mood. However—

"I-I need to prepare myself mentally, so give me some time!"

Words of a final last ditch struggle.

The city streets of Rome were silent.

It was already past 2am. Unlike Japan where twenty-four hour businesses were found all over the place, not a single shop remained open at this time. Furthermore, street lighting was much less common than in Japan.

Godou and Erica strolled along these dim European streets at night.

Walking in front was Erica who led the way to the hotel. Godou followed a step behind her. Traveling by car would be the normal course of action in this situation, but in order to buy time to "prepare himself mentally" they chose this inefficient means of movement.

"Oh, wouldn't it be nice to get Arianna to drive the car here to take us somewhere? Meanwhile, you'll finish preparing yourself mentally, Godou."

"That's not fair for Anna-san, definitely don't do that..."

Erica's assistant and maid, Miss Arianna Arial di, commonly called Anna.

Godou answered Erica because the mistress brought up her name. Normally, it was already bedtime. Godou would feel bad about rousing someone up from sleep at this time of the night.

"No problem. I have already instructed her to remain on standby until we return to the hotel. Riding in Arianna's car to race across the late night highway could turn out to be a rather interesting experience. Not too long ago, she gave me a ride to watch the ocean at night, together with Lily—a female friend of mine."

"You allowed someone who drives like that to get on the highway!?"

Arianna-san's driving skills were somewhat dangerous. Godou had already experienced it during the daytime.

Although Erica had said something like 'very incredibly, Arianna has never had an accident,' Godou definitely could not bank on such hopes again in the future.

Godou was astounded that she would do something so ridiculous.

"I always felt that it would be a totally new experience, and the result was exactly as predicted. The feeling of sweaty hands and even a frozen spine could be savored fully. This is probably what it means to experience a so-called spectacular scene..."

"Of course. The danger level is like riding a roller coaster without any safety measures at all!"

In the end, the joyride suggestion was abandoned and the two continued their way through the night.

While walking, they sometimes engaged in idle chatter and there were times when they walked in silence.

Godou felt rather incredible, to think he would be spending time with Erica like this.

Being together with her was not unpleasant. Even when there was nothing to say, it did not feel especially noticeable. Conversely, even after he noticed, it did not feel awkward at all.

The feeling was like being with family or very close male friends.

But to Godou, Erica was still a member of the opposite gender after all. Among the people he knew, she was the most gorgeous and attractive girl. Aware of the existence of this beauty beside him, Godou felt his heart beginning to race.

Nevertheless, it was unbelievable that he could get along with her so casually.

For Godou who was not used to getting along with girls, this was unprecedented.

However, that was how it was.

If Erica did not force kisses on him teasingly, then Godou would consider her a girl he could get along with open arms more than anyone else...

But clearly she was a mischievous woman who resembled the devil.

"What's up with that shop?"

Along the way, Godou discovered a shop with all the lights on.

An eatery with a red themed decor—It appeared to be a Chinese restaurant.

The current time was late at night. This was an ordinary part of town rather than a bustling commercial zone.

In spite of all that, this shop was still open this late.

"What amazing devotion to work. Even as a shop in Italy."

Godou could not help but offer praise.

As a Japanese, he was quite taken aback by unfamiliar occurrences in southern Europe, Italy included, such as "shops in the streets were closed on Sundays," "open twenty-four hours a day, what's that?" or "the summer vacation lasted a full month."

He had even heard of office workers who would "go home for lunch with their family then take a nice nap afterwards."

Naturally, the Italian girl offered her own comments on Godou's Japanese perspective.

"Godou, forgive me for being frank, but being hardworking is not necessarily a virtue."

Wagging her index finger from side to side, Erica explained with an air of superiority.

"The important thing is the quality of labor, not volume. Efficiency and results. Even if twenty hours out of a day's twenty four were spent on entertainment, it's fine so long as sufficient results are produced."

"But I think the usual behavior is also very important..."

Godou objected to the concept of nobility's labor presented from Erica's arrogant perspective.

"Besides, rather than spending so much leisure on having fun, I'd feel better if I used it productively to do work."

"You see, this is the rumored wisdom of Japanese businessmen. A person's talent and ability can be judged by how much leisure they can afford to spend on meaningful matters of elegance."

The opinions of the serious Japanese man and the free-spirited Italian beauty were akin to parallel lines that never intersected.

The intense fragrance of sesame oil wafted out of the Chinese restaurant.

"...Let's enter?"

"...Coming from you, that counts as a good suggestion."

After the exertion from the duel earlier as well as all the walking through the night, Godou was feeling a bit hungry.

The two of them casually established a Japanese-Italian truce and entered the shop.

Godou attempted to inquire about the closing time from the Chinese restaurant staff who happened to be at the door. The answer he got was half past four.

"Eh, that's almost until dawn!?"

Even though it was not open for the full twenty-four hours, there was not much difference. This was virtually the same as Japanese ramen specialty stores.

Perhaps in a metropolis like Rome the Eternal City, there was demand for this sort of hours. As Godou felt impressed, the server passed in front of Godou.

He was carrying in his hand a large plate of Chinese buns.

Seeing this, Erica seemed to have gotten an idea. She began conversing with the store employee who had answered Godou's question.

Then ten minutes passed—

After leaving the shop, Godou and Erica continued to stroll through the streets at night. Godou carried a large paper bag in his hands, filled with quite a few Chinese buns. These hot buns were freshly steamed and hot air seeped out through the bag.

"Godou, give me one."

"Here."

He took out a bun from the paper bag and handed it to Erica.

As their fingers touched slightly, Godou felt an inexplicable sense of embarrassment. Then Erica chuckled, further intensifying Godou's feeling.

Oh well, by this point, Godou did not think this was the only cause.

Moreover, this midnight snack was the result of Erica's negotiations with the store employee just now.

Pleading repeatedly, she managed to take their purchases out of the shop which normally did not provide takeout service. Indeed, since they were on the road back to the hotel, getting takeout was preferable to sitting down to eat.

These Chinese buns were of the pork bun variety.

Taking a huge bite, Godou found the meat juices from the bun filling up his mouth. Quite delicious. Enjoying this midnight snack, the two of them continued to stroll casually.

Godou was overcome with deep emotion.

He never expected he would ever have a chance to be off in the faraway land of Rome, late at night like this, strolling casually through the streets with a blonde girl, eating pork buns...

Had someone told Godou several months ago he was going to experience this kind of future, he would surely have roared with laughter.

Unintentionally, he glanced at Erica's side profile. Then discovering his gaze, Erica smiled back at him. That was all. No words were exchanged deliberately.

But it was already enough.

Godou could vividly feel what seemed to be the "relationship" he had cultivated with Erica.

Furthermore, wondering what he should say a little while later, Godou finally finished his "mental preparation."

In the end, it took them fifty minutes of walking to reach the ten-odd story hotel.

Glancing at the attendant standing at the entrance, Erica asked:

"So Godou, are you prepared?"

"Yeah. I guess so."

"Very well then. Let us exchange 'goodnights,' okay?"

The blonde girl giggled mischievously. However, Godou's response was:

"Umm well... I can't do it after all."

"Can't do it?"

As Erica expressed mild surprise, Godou continued.

"Yeah. I definitely can't kiss you with a casual relaxed mood."

Godou expressed his thoughts candidly.

"How should I put this, I suppose it's my obstinacy as a Japanese...? Perhaps I would not have a problem with someone else, but with you, Erica, engaging in that kind of behavior just feels so difficult no matter what..."

He could feel the loud beating of his heart whenever he made close contact with Erica.

Recalling the feeling, he made this vague statement.

"This has nothing to do with nationality but your personal problem as the man Kusanagi Godou. Seriously, you're obstinate only on issues like this!"

Erica asserted with a tone of lamentation.

"Clearly we have already engaged in behavior even more intense than ritual kissing, so there's no point in being conscious of such meaningless things. Besides, while we were walking here together, didn't you fail to hold my hand? That's quite ill-mannered too."

"Hand!?"

"Yes. Given this rare opportunity for us to take a stroll in the streets of Rome, just the two of us, we should have held hands and embraced each other, to enjoy this short tryst."

"O-Only couples would do that!"

"Have you forgotten? I am your lover, the woman closest to you in this world."

Erica declared proudly to Godou's panic.

"Even if I were not, there is nothing wrong with what I said, based on your behavior towards girls in general."

"N-Nonsense. I have neither done that sort of thing nor spoken those kinds of words."

"Not words. However, I wish to accept your hands with my whole body, expressing my intent through my attitude. That said, you seem to have failed to notice."

"Eh... Really?"

Was that the meaning behind Erica's attitude displayed earlier?

Stunned, Godou watched as the passionate Latin girl sighed before him.

"Indeed. But I can't believe you simply walked side by side with me, Godou... You are really slow witted and a block of wood who can't read the mood. In Italy, even students in elementary school know how to please a girl."

"No, but I'm Japanese."

"You're totally unmanly whenever you make that kind of statement. Don't say it ever again."

Erica suddenly went "however" and smiled.

"I admit you are a very special person, so I shall forgive you on this point. If you don't express your gratitude towards my vast generosity, perhaps you might suffer retribution in the future."

"Eh!?"

"Hoho. Did you fail to notice? What was already voiced out just now."

How could this be? No, but perhaps. Godou wondered if he had said something unwise without noticing?

As Godou felt shaken, Erica led him into the hotel and received two keys at the reception. Handing one of them over to Godou, Erica said:

"Then rest well tonight. Goodnight."

"Yeah, goodnight."

Godou nodded as he yawned.

He was going to have a bath and go to sleep immediately after getting to his room. After all, he was already quite tired. As decided earlier, he would reflect properly on tonight's events in the morning—Just as he was considering these and other matters...

Erica kissed him.

A light peck of a kiss. Bodily contact that substituted for a greeting... Completely unexpected.

Immediately, the second wave of kissing followed.

Erica sealed Godou's lips with her own and began to squirm seductively.

Then she inserted her tongue. Erica began to lick Godou's tongue passionately with careful attention... This lasted a minute or two.

Phew. Releasing their lips, Erica exhaled softly.

"W-What are you doing so suddenly..."

"A goodnight kiss. Since you won't kiss me, then I have to kiss you instead."

Erica displayed an adorable smile in response to Godou's shocked question.

What on earth was she doing in this hotel lobby!? No wait, this was late at night, without a single person around. Perhaps being seen was avoided—

Surveying the surroundings, Godou realized.

The young attendant standing at the reception was staring in his direction.

If one were to ask if the attendant respected the guests' privacy with a sense of professionalism and cast a glance that pretended not to have witnessed anything, the answer was a resounding no.

Nodding towards Godou, he seemed to be saying "I saw everything" as he winked and smiled.

Moreover, Erica went as far as to wave in response to the hotel staff. Completely calm and composed, she maintained her devilish smile.

However, as an ordinary member of the Yamato race, Godou was not in command of that sort of composure.

Lacking in Latin lineage, Kusanagi Godou frantically dashed towards the elevator. He had to take a shower in his room as quickly as possible, to wash away this sense of embarrassment!

"This is truly goodnight this time, Godou. See you tomorrow morning."

Erica sounded as if she were going to pursue him. Showing only his back as he listened to her words, Godou rushed into the elevator as if fleeing for his life.



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